

EAST TIMOR

THE WORLD'S NEWEST COUNTRY

Grades 10-12

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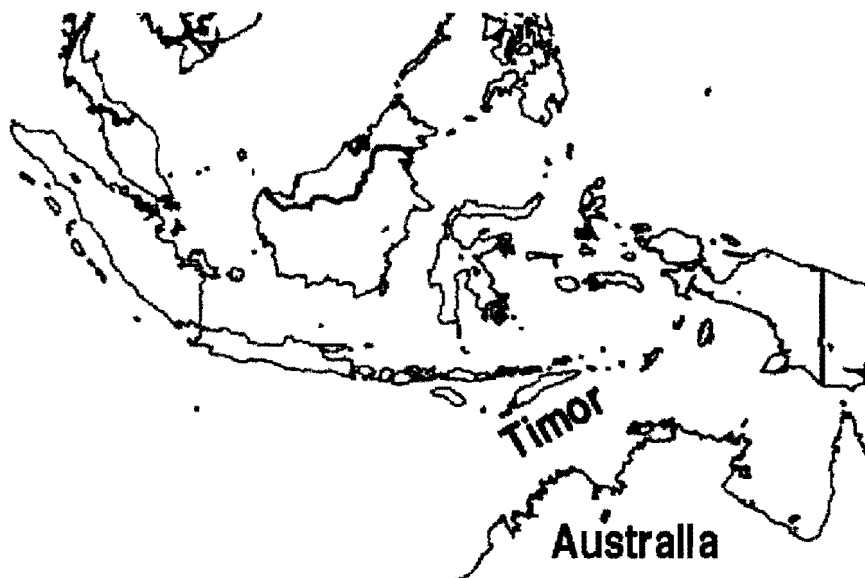
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Preface

The purpose of this book is to provide students with an overview the world's newest nation—East Timor. The narrative begins with a section on pre-colonial Timor and continues through the Portuguese era. It covers the 25-year period when Indonesia governed the entire island of Timor. After a varied and violent past, on September 27, 2002 this little known state became the United Nation's 191st member. In addition to an accounting of important historical events, the book covers language, education, religion, women's issues and government.

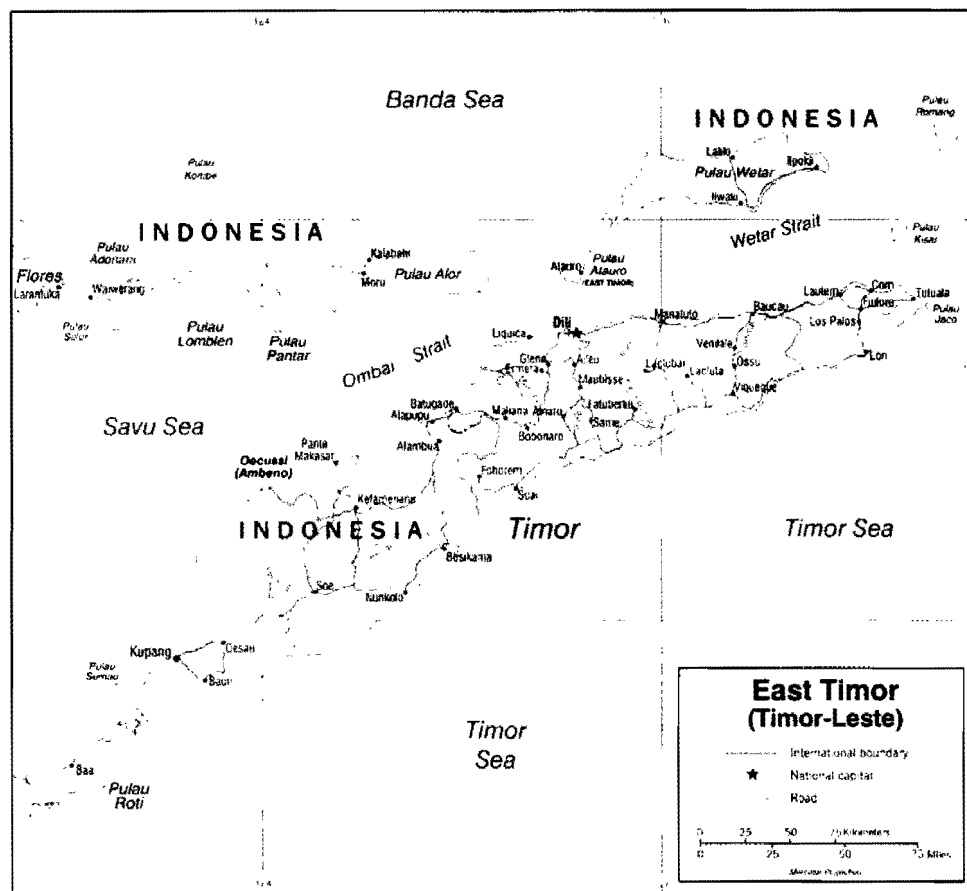
The Center for Southeast Asian Studies wishes to acknowledge Dr. Douglas Kammen who carefully read and edited an early draft of the book. His experiences in East Timor significantly enriched its contents.

Timor in Southeast Asia



Part I Historical Background

The Indonesian islands of Lombok, Komodo, Sumba, Sumbawa, Flores and Timor comprise a region called Nusa Tenggara. Timor, a small island about the size of Maryland, was exposed to Portuguese influence from the late 1500s. Coastal regions of the island did not actually come under the control of Portugal until 1769, and the interior of the island much later than that. From 1976 to 1999 it was Indonesia's twenty-seventh province. On May 20, 2002 East Timor became an independent state. The story of East Timor's road to independence is one of hardship, violence, bravery and endurance. It is a lesson in perseverance that can be a model for all nations who must struggle for freedom



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1. Pre-Colonial Timor

Timor has been known for its aromatic sandalwood for 2000 years. Islands with especially significant stands of this valuable wood were Flores, Sumba and Timor. Records from hundreds of years ago indicate that the sandalwood from these islands was of such a desirable quality that young trees were taken to India and China where they were propagated. In Chinese chronicles dating to the 6th Century, the traveler Hsing Cha Sheng Can wrote about ships from China coming to Nusa Tenggara to trade ceramics, and silks in exchange for sandalwood; it is said that merchants from India brought horses from Arabia to Timor to trade for this valuable product.

Before 1500, most Timorese lived in villages in the mountainous interior of the island where they practiced subsistence agriculture. Essentially only those Timorese who bartered with other peoples in the archipelago or other Asians and Arabic traders seeking sandalwood came regularly to the coastal areas. At that time Timor was made up of ritual centers that prevailed over a number of communities. The region of Wehale was such a center. During the 17th and 18th centuries coastal kingdoms grew in prominence. They gained power by organizing labor to cut sandalwood trees that they often traded for slaves. The coastal kingdoms eventually incorporated the inland kingdoms and thus solidified their power by controlling labor, which they used for local wars and to control trade. Mercantile activity of this nature was carried out on a regular basis many centuries before the arrival of Europeans in the region.

Discussion Question

1. Sandalwood was the major source of income and bartered goods in Timor prior to 1500. How would sandalwood trade in the 16th and 17th centuries have differed if current international regulations related to conservation have been in effect? Compare the economic results of over-cutting sandalwood to the present day economic questions raised in the matter of drift net fishing. (For material on driftnet fishing, see <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/1salmon/salmesa/pubs/fsdrift.htm>; and <http://www.unescap.org/mced2000/pacific/background/drift.htm>)

2. The Portuguese

There is some debate as to the date the first Portuguese explorers arrived in Timor. Several accounts give the date of 1511 when Alfonso de Abreu and the cartographer, Francisco Rodriquez, sailed through the waters surrounding Nusa Tenggara. Legend has it that the famous explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, was on that expedition, but there is no proof of this. Was someone from this voyage the first Portuguese man to land on Timor? Portuguese traders in Asia had certainly learned of the groves of sandalwood trees by that time, and they were no doubt eager to seek a share of the lucrative trade. The Timorese, old hands in the business of bartering in exchange for the wood, would have been quite likely to trade it for guns and metal tools with the Portuguese.

All school children learn about Ferdinand Magellan, the Portuguese navigator who sailed under the Spanish flag. Magellan, like Columbus, believed that he could sail west to reach Asia. His five ships and 250-man crew departed from Sanlucar de Barrameda in Spain on August 10, 1519 to begin a journey that would take those few men who survived around the world. Although Magellan was Portuguese, the king of Spain financed his circumnavigation of the world. The king of Portugal had an earlier disagreement with Magellan when the explorer had been on a Portuguese expedition in Asia. The Portuguese ruler therefore distrusted Magellan, and would not support his plan to travel west to reach the east. It was for this reason that Magellan's ships sailed under the Spanish flag. In 1522, a few years after the expedition left Spain, Magellan's remaining ship, the *Victoria*, landed on Timor and Captain Juan Sebastian del Cano reported that Spanish who had come before them had contaminated the island with syphilis. Pigafetta, the ship's historian, recorded this remark in the ship's log. This indicated to the crew of the *Victoria* that Europeans had been on Timor prior to 1522. However, it is now known that at this time venereal disease was not uncommon among traders from other Asian countries and could have been introduced to Timor before either the Spanish or Portuguese arrived there. Magellan was not aboard the *Victoria* when it docked in Timor. He had been killed in a battle on the Philippine island of Mactan located just off Cebu on April 27, 1521. At the time Magellan's expedition landed in Timor there were only about 40 men aboard the *Victoria*, the only one of Magellan's original five ships that was still afloat.

Unlike the Spanish, the Portuguese in the eastern Indonesian archipelago decided to stay and made preparations to establish a trading fort on Timor. At first Portugal did not govern Santa Cruz (their new name for Timor) as a colony, but rather treated it as a mission where their intent was to convert the indigenous people to Christianity and provide a safe haven for Portuguese merchants to trade in sandalwood. In 1589 the Portuguese sent Dominican friars to the island where they built a mission in Kupang, in western Timor. The friars were well received by the local chief, but the church was abandoned in six months. Forty years later the Dominicans returned to Timor and established a permanent mission.

The first recorded incident of armed conflict between the Portuguese and the Timorese took place in 1641. At that time a number of local rulers controlled specific regions of the island. In 1642 the Portuguese were victorious over the troops of one of these rulers, of the chief of Wehale, in a battle near Atapupu located on the north coast of

Central Timor. Following the Portuguese victory there several local chiefs converted to Christianity. This marked the beginning of the presence of the Catholic Church and of Portuguese rule on Timor. A Portuguese Governor, Antonio de Mesquita, was appointed in 1696 to oversee Portuguese affairs on the islands of Solor and Timor. He was expelled in 1697. In 1701 Antonio Coelho Guerreiro was the first Governor General based on Timor. This pattern of frequent turnover continued through the turn of the century, as Timor's indigenous Christianized rulers forced Portugal's government representatives out of office. The form of Catholicism practiced in Timor was a mixture of basic Catholic tenets and the animistic beliefs of the islanders.

Since the end of the 1500s a new group of Timorese had been gaining control on the island—the Topasses. This name, given to the offspring of Portuguese sailors and traders and the women from nearby islands—Solor and Larantuka—comprised a substantial settlement on Timor. The most significant change brought about by these people was the introduction of Portuguese culture to Timor. Indeed these newcomers not only spoke Portuguese, the language of the sailors and merchants, but they were familiar with their customs as well. The Topasses soon controlled local trade. Conflict among the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Topasses and the indigenous Timorese waxed and waned over the next century as each tried to control the profitable sandalwood trade, and to some extent the slave trade. Portugal continued to barter the wood from Timor and the surrounding islands of Flores and Solor, but it was never able to establish a monopoly on that trade. This was mainly due to the existing commercial network of Chinese, other Asians, Arabs and Timorese who ignored the Portuguese regulations and simply adapted to the European presence there while continuing their business of sandalwood trade.

The establishment of the position of Portuguese Governor signified the beginning of almost continuous Timorese resistance to the European presence on their island. Cooperation between the local rulers, on whom the Portuguese relied for smooth trade arrangements, and the Portuguese government administrators was always precarious. It should be noted that the indigenous rulers who interacted with the Portuguese administrators became the elite class in Timor that still exist to some extent today. This interaction was similar to other regions in the Indonesian archipelago where the Dutch collected the goods and services of villagers through a local ruler who was in a position of authority and could demand labor from the peasant farmers in his district. The matter of conducting commercial matters with the village people through already established means was a standard procedure during much of the colonial era in Southeast Asia.

Discussion Questions

1. The explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, sailed under the Spanish flag. When his crewmembers landed on Timor they did not claim the island for Spain. They had previously landed in the Philippines and claimed those islands for Spain, why do you think they did not plant the Spanish flag on Timor? If Timor had been a Spanish colony and more closely connected to the Philippines how do you think that would have impacted on the island's future?
2. The Portuguese were never able to maintain full control of Timor. The local Christianized Timorese resisted Portuguese rule and dealt with the Europeans only when required by commercial matters. Explain why the Topasses were more successful in their dealings with both the indigenous Timorese and the Portuguese.

3. The Dutch in Timor

Soon after the turn of the century, in 1613, the Dutch came to Timor. They too were interested in the sandalwood. The Dutch struck treaties with several local rulers and established trading posts on the island, most notably around Kupang in West Timor. The Dutch and the Portuguese were soon at odds as they vied for control of the profitable wood. The Portuguese had built a fort at Kupang in 1566. Skirmishes between the two European nations continued until 1652 when the Dutch succeeded in ousting the Portuguese from Kupang. Conflict between the two European nations continued on Timor intermittently until 1755 when they signed the Contract of Paravicini and the Dutch and the Portuguese unofficially regarded the island as two separate regions, with the western half of the island belonging to the Dutch and the eastern half belonging to Portugal. In 1846 there were negotiations on the matter of a Dutch enclave in Maubara that made it impossible for the Portuguese to establish a customs service there. As a result, Portugal traded Flores and adjoining islands where it did not maintain a presence with the Dutch for Maubara. In 1859 a treaty was signed in The Hague, but it was not until 17 August 1916 that both countries officially recognized the border between West Timor and East Timor. In 2002, when newly independent East Timor joined the United Nations, it opted to use its Portuguese name, Timor Leste.

Discussion Question

1. It took well over a hundred years for the Dutch and Portuguese to sign a formal treaty that divided Timor between the two European nations. Since they essentially agreed to an informal division in 1777, why do you think they did not get around to a formal treaty until 1916?

4. Portuguese Government in East Timor

Disputes between the two European nations had kept control of the island unsettled for a number of years. As mentioned earlier, in 1854 the Portuguese sold their claim to the neighboring island of Flores to the Dutch to gain exclusive control of Maubara, however, they kept their colony in East Timor.

Since both the Dutch and the Portuguese maintained only modest garrisons around their Timor headquarters, it is not surprising that conflict continually erupted in outlying regions of the island.

There were a number of confrontations between the Topasse and the Portuguese. One of the earliest, the Cailaco rebellion in 1719, persisted until 1726 and ended with the Portuguese being forced to change their headquarters from Lifau to Dili. There is no record that this rebellion against the Europeans was carried on across the island. Indeed, at that time East Timor did not have one centralized government, or a common language. The success of the Topasse rebels is due primarily to the fact that they could communicate with Tetum and Portuguese speakers and that had knowledge of both European and Timorese culture. Numerous rebellions opposing Portugal's taxing policies continued in East Timor from 1860 to 1912. For example, there were rebellions against taxes in Vemasse, Lermean and Saniry in 1867 and similar revolts in Cova in 1868 and in Morqadores in 1887.

In October 1866 a fire leveled the Portuguese urban center of Dili. Everything was burned to the ground—the military buildings, the library, the church, government buildings and perhaps most important, the archives. Coupled with a decline in the availability of sandalwood, this forced Portugal to find a new source of income from their tiny colony. Coffee had long been a significant crop in Timor, but it now seemed the answer to the island's money problems and was soon a major export. However, coffee never brought in the income that sandalwood had generated. This was partly because Portugal provided too little capital to Timor to encourage planters and partly because of the continuing rebellions that kept the island in a state of upheaval.

The overthrow of the Portuguese monarchy in 1910 triggered a forceful reaction in East Timor. The Timorese elite who had influence with the colonial government was not happy to see it overthrown and replaced by a republic. Many actions would result from this change in Timor's government, not the least of which would be the expulsion of Jesuit missionaries. The new government in Portugal ordered the nationalization of church property and the expulsion of all personnel of religious orders from its territories. Jesuit priests in Timor were immediately affected by this order.

Among the local revolts against the colonial government, the most devastating occurred in 1911 when Don Boaventura of Manufahi, a Timorese ruler in a southern coastal region of East Timor, led an uprising against the Portuguese colonial government. This conflict that actually dated from the late 19th century was expensive for the Portuguese who had to bring in soldiers from their Macau colony, on China's southern coast, to augment its army in East Timor. The fighting went on for two years and ended with a victory for the Portuguese in 1912. According to historian Geoffrey Gunn, *The Times* of London reported that the final battle of the war resulted in at least 3,000 Timorese dead and 4,000 taken prisoner.

After the revolutionaries in Portugal overthrew the monarchy in 1910 the colonial government in East Timor began to alter its economic focus and looked for new ways to generate taxes. It not only taxed plantations but also levied a head tax on all males over 18 years of age. The latter tax forced peasants to seek wage-paying jobs to meet this burden. The plantation system of coffee production required a laboring class that would work for wages. Prior to the advent of plantations, villagers would provide taxes to their village heads in the form of goods or services. The new system required money to pay taxes, and if a citizen did not have money he was forced to borrow it. This created a system of money-lending, interest payments and debt that was crushing for the peasant farmer. It also brought an end to slavery, a common practice on the island at that time. It should be noted that slavery in East Timor was not the same as that in the southern United States. Slaves in Timor were more like family members. They usually lived and ate with the families they served. Slavery was often the fate of peoples of other tribal groups that were defeated in warfare. These economic changes instigated a substantial number of rebellions beginning in 1860 and continuing until the beginning of World War II in 1941. The Timorese did not readily accept the government's new plan for generating capital, and in many cases the local rulers led rebellions against the government's new demands.

Discussion Question

1. In 1910 the Portuguese monarchy was overthrown. This was a cause for alarm among the elite class in East Timor who had developed a comfortable working relationship with the Portuguese government there. As a result of this change in the government in Portugal, a plantation economy emerged in East Timor. Compare the plantation economy with its salaried income and taxes to the economy that existed under the Portuguese monarchy where the East Timorese elite collected goods from the peasant farmers and turned them over to the Portuguese government representative.

5. World War II

On February 19, 1942 Japanese Imperial Forces invaded West Timor. Allied troops there were defeated and were either killed or taken prisoner in the former Dutch colony. In East Timor the situation was somewhat different. Japan was at war with the Netherlands; it was not at war with Portugal. Japanese forces entered East Timor in a different capacity than their invasion of the Dutch colony of West Timor. Despite this difference, by August 9, 1942 the Japanese began to dismantle the Portuguese colonial government in East Timor. The Japanese Army throughout Timor had to confront a substantial Australian guerrilla army during the latter years of the war. This body of fighters existed to some extent in both in East and West Timor, but was more active in East Timor. Guerrilla warfare forced the Japanese to employ increasingly harsher restrictions on the people of East Timor as the war progressed. After the war ended there was disagreement between the Portuguese and the Australians as to which country would accept the Japanese surrender. The Australians argued that they alone had defended the island against the Japanese invasion and that the Portuguese policy of neutrality during the war had enabled the Japanese to conduct military operations from East Timor. In an attempt at good will, the Australians and the Portuguese conducted the surrender ceremony jointly. The United States never had the interest in Timor that Australia has had. One has only to look at a map to see Australia's close proximity to the island would give it considerable interest in East Timor's future. Two days later a Portuguese ship arrived in Dili carrying troops. This marked the restoration of Portuguese control of East Timor. When Portugal returned to take control of her colony in East Timor it was undoubtedly with considerable relief. Unlike many Asian countries under Japanese occupation during World War II, East Timor had not witnessed the growth of a significant nationalist organization that sought independence from colonial rule.

Discussion Question

1. Explain why the Japanese Army of occupation treated West Timor differently from East Timor. Compare this to the situation in Vietnam where the French government was an ally of Germany and hence not an enemy of Japan.

6. Post World War II Timor

In the post-war period Timor society continued to have definite divisions. A substantial Chinese community controlled the commercial sectors in the urban areas. Indeed, after World War II the Chinese controlled 95% of East Timor's businesses. Europeans for the most part were in East Timor as administrators, political exiles, military personnel and merchants. There was a small Arab community. They were Muslim and mostly small businessmen. With the exception of the chiefs (*liurai*), the indigenous people, the Timorese, were often at the bottom of the economic ladder. They lived in the poorer sections of towns and worked at manual labor. However, education did blur class divisions somewhat. After World War II educational opportunities for the East Timorese were pretty much limited to the sons of the upper classes.

By 1963 Portuguese Timor was considered to be an overseas province of Portugal. It had a governor and administrative staff. The government consisted of the Governor's Council and the Legislative Council and each was comprised of elected and appointed officials. At this stage East Timor was not a democracy controlled by the people of East Timor. The Portuguese government appointed most officials. Although eventually Timorese were allowed to hold seats on the two councils they never rose to high positions in government.

East Timor did not prosper under the Portuguese either before or after World War II. Even as late as 1971 the Timorese were among the world's poorest people. In that year Indonesians in the neighboring Sunda Islands were earning Australian \$80/week (approximately US\$55) while Timorese were earning A\$2/week (US\$1.48). On Timor an unskilled laborer was paid A\$1/week, while a government clerk was paid A\$25/week. Portugal had done little to improve East Timor's infrastructure. Roads that existed were poorly built, and the airport in Dili could not accommodate large planes until 1960.

Oil is present offshore in Timor and initially Australian companies were interested in drilling there. Australia was concerned in the 1970s when the Portuguese government in East Timor allowed an American company to drill for oil, although the U.S. never became an established presence in the oil industry there. Even with the expectation of income from oil, Timor was not a profitable venture for Portugal. Portugal simply did not have the financial means to develop those resources that could have provided revenue sufficient to support the colony. By the time the European nation realized the potential for Timor—its natural resources and its strategic location—the independence movement was underway and it was too late for Portugal to turn the tide.

Discussion Question

1. Give three reasons why post-World War II East Timor was such a poor region. Why do you think Portugal neglected it?

7. Nationalism

Unlike other colonized regions of Southeast Asia, East Timor's nationalist groups did not develop significantly during World War II. However, one should not have the impression that prior to Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1975 there was no movement toward independence. East Timor had models for independence movements in its immediate vicinity, and by the late 1950s there were reports of East Timorese rebellion against the Portuguese regime. Although the East Timorese probably were not aware of the details of the rebellion in Maluku (also referred to as the Moluccas) they no doubt had heard rumors of the conflict there. The Portuguese secret police kept tight control over information in East Timor and such news would not have been commonly announced. The Moluccans established the Republic of the Southern Moluccas when they wanted to remain under Dutch government control and not be placed under the new Indonesian government of President Sukarno. They were unsuccessful in this endeavor, but their rebellion was well publicized. In 1958 there were rebellions against the new Indonesian government on the islands of Sumatra and Sulawesi, where Indonesians who opposed the growth of the Communist Party sought to break away from Indonesia. In Sulawesi, fundamentalist Muslims formed a group called Permesta that wanted more control over local resources. Similar rebellions occurred in Aceh, a region in north Sumatra that was never completely under the Dutch colonial government. These regions, which opposed their inclusion in Indonesia, provided models for East Timor when the nationalist movement there was in its early stages. Aceh and Maluku still harbor active secessionist movements today.

It was in this environment that the 1959 Viqueque rebellion occurred. This insurrection was exacerbated by ethnic friction among the tribal groups that were largely anti-colonial and by the fact that the Portuguese assembled a Timorese militia to combat the rebels. Although the battles were short lived, about a week, it is reported that between 500 and 1,000 people died. Later reports showed that this was not a spontaneous uprising against Portuguese control, but more likely had been planned by outside forces. The question remains as to the involvement of the Indonesian government in this uprising. There is even one school of thought that credits the American CIA with an active interest. That theory claims that the United States had been involved in combating communism in Sulawesi through its support for the anti-Jakarta rebellion there. Extending American influence to East Timor would give the U.S. with a good location from which to provide support for the eastern Indonesian anti-government sentiment in Maluku. During this period the cold war was at its height and combating left-wing governments was a U.S. priority, although governments that supported equal division of resources were often popular with the poorer people in Southeast Asia. They tended to support reform measures that provided peasant farmers the land they needed to grow rice. When the rebels were defeated, a number of their leaders who were involved in the Viqueque rebellion were exiled to Angola, one of Portugal's colonies in Africa. In 1970 Portugal exiled the Timorese journalist, José Ramos-Horta, to another of its African colonies, Mozambique.

It was not until the mid-1960s, when Australian newspaper and other media people began to visit Timor, that the outside world became aware of what life was like for the

Timorese in the Portuguese colony. These journalists not only exposed the negative side of colonialism, but they were the first to expose Indonesia's goal of taking over East Timor.

It was in 1973 that the world first heard about the Timor Liberation Front—a group described as anti-Portuguese, seeking independence for East Timor. José Ramos-Horta, who was later to win the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, was a member of this group. The emergence of a new government in Portugal in 1974 was the catalyst that gave rise to several political parties in East Timor—the *Uniao Democratica Timorese* (UDT) that favored a gradual separation from Portugal; the *Frente Revolucionaria de Timore Leste* (Fretilin) led by José Ramos-Horta that favored immediate independence; and Apodeti an organization that supported integration with Indonesia. From the beginning Fretilin gained strong support among the rural population who distrusted the elite favored by the Portuguese.

Discussion Question

1. Explain why the Viqueque rebellion in 1959 led to Portugal exiling rebel leaders. What role did Communism play in the Portuguese government's decision to do this?

8. Transfer of Sovereignty in East Timor

On April 25, 1974 the conservative government of Marcello Caetano, Prime Minister of Portugal and successor to Portugal's dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, was overthrown in a military coup known as the "Carnation Revolution". This change in government ended almost 50 years of strict right-wing rule in Portugal. The new left-wing military government in Lisbon supported immediate independence for Portugal's colonies. At the time this list included Portugal's African colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe and its Asian colonies of East Timor and Macau. In an agreement signed on April 13, 1987 between China and Portugal Macau was named a special administrative region (SAR) of China, and it was agreed that on December 20, 1999 it would become part of China. Although the new government in Portugal planned a gradual decolonization process for the rest of its former colonies, political units in these newly free countries saw matters differently and local politics took on urgency. The unexpected new status of these colonies, although exciting, brought a new set of problems to the former Portuguese territories, none of which was prepared for independence and as a consequence civil wars that had been on-going in these countries increased in intensity.

When the Portuguese withdrew from East Timor in November 1975, Fretilin declared the island an independent state. In early 1975 Fretilin and UDT had united to oppose Indonesia's strong support for Apodeti, but this coalition did not last, and in May 1975 UDT withdrew from the agreement. This withdrawal announcement was the cause of great alarm in Indonesia. The government had just survived a brutal period in its history, one many Indonesians blamed on the Communist Party. Now this little half-island was showing strong signs of supporting Communism, and the Jakarta government was not about to have a Communist government in the midst of its archipelago.

East Timor faced a number of problems, not the least of which was a lack of a cadre of trained administrators prepared to take over the reins of government. As a result several political parties were formed and although they were mentioned previously, more detailed descriptions of these organizations are necessary to fully understand the political climate of east Timor.

The first, the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), supported gradual withdrawal from Portugal and opposed the integration of Timor with any foreign country. The UDT was popular with local elite Timorese and colonial officials.

The second group, the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT), later renamed the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, is better known as Fretilin. It also supported gradual withdrawal from Portugal. In addition, Fretilin initiated literacy campaigns, agricultural development, and a health care program. Fretilin's constituency was primarily young people and mid-level government officials.

A third party, the Association for the Integration of Timor into Indonesia, was soon renamed the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (Apodeti). Apodeti was supported by the Indonesian government and was far less popular among the Timorese people than the other parties. Several more political parties sprang up but they never attracted significant followings.

Indonesia gained independence from the Dutch in 1949 and at that time West Timor became part of Indonesia. Thus the island of Timor went from being half-Dutch (West Timor) and half-Portuguese (East Timor) to being half-Indonesian (West Timor) and half-Portuguese. At first Indonesia seemed to have little interest in East Timor. Indeed, in a June 1974 speech, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik claimed that all nations have a right to independence, and he further stated that Indonesia would strive for good relations with whoever governs East Timor. However, not all Indonesians agreed with the Foreign Minister, most notably high-level military officers. Major General Ali Murtopo and Brigadier General Benny Murdani were in the forefront of the opposition that was soon referring to Fretilin as a communist organization and to UDT as neo-fascists. The concern of the military was twofold. First, the Portuguese government that granted East Timor independence was a liberal left-wing government and was often referred to as pro-Communist. In 1974 communism was not taken lightly in Indonesia and since Fretilin was supported by the Portuguese government Indonesia tended to see Fretilin as a communist party. Only nine years earlier, in 1965, a bloody coup in Indonesia that the Indonesian military blamed on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) had resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths throughout the country. That coup d'etat ended with the eradication of the Indonesian Communist Party, the third largest communist party in the world. At that time only China and the Soviet Union had larger communist parties. Indonesia's second concern was the threat of secessionist movements. The military, along with nationalists, were concerned about independence movements within Indonesia. They were apprehensive that if East Timor, located in the middle of the Indonesian archipelago, were allowed to be a free nation, it would encourage other disgruntled regions of Indonesia to seek the same status.

In early 1975 Fretilin and UDT combined to counter Indonesia's strong support for Apodeti. However, this alliance did not last long. Fretilin did not believe that UDT members were thoroughly committed to the independence movement, and the UDT saw Fretilin as too radical. In May 1975 UDT pulled out of the coalition. A meeting to determine East Timor's status was held in the Portuguese colony of Macau in June and Fretilin did not attend. Apodeti presented itself as the leading Timorese Party, and UDT took the opportunity to criticize Fretilin. At that gathering it was decided that elections for a popular assembly would be held in October 1976 and that they would decide East Timor's political future.

In August UDT launched a coup to rid Timor of communists. Fretilin members had not seen this move coming, and they demanded that the Portuguese governor, Lemos Pires, stop the UDT effort aimed at purging Timor of members of the Communist Party. The governor took no action; he simply confined Portuguese troops to their barracks. A week later Fretilin members won over the Portuguese colonial military and thus gained access to a source of weapons and soldiers who had fought in Africa. In September Fretilin defeated UDT forces that had crossed the border from West Timor and as a result controlled most of East Timor. Indonesia, fearing Fretilin's take-over of East Timor, joined the battle as a supporter of the new anti-Communist alliance of Apodeti and UDT along with several smaller parties. The alliance's forces were heavily weighted with Indonesian troops. Matters got worse when several foreign journalists covering the situation were killed. In early November Indonesian and Portuguese officials met in Rome, but no decisions were made and follow-up talks never took place. Meanwhile in

East Timor the situation grew tenser as Indonesia-supported Apodeti and UDT forces continued to attack Fretilin strongholds. On November 24th Fretilin appealed to the United Nations to demand that Indonesian forces withdraw from East Timor and on November 28th Fretilin declared East Timor independent. The following day the Apodeti-UDT alliance countered with a call for integration with Indonesia. Indonesia, declaring its support for the majority desire for integration, had already begun an invasion of East Timor. It now prepared to invade the rest of the region.

The invasion began on December 7, 1975 on three fronts—a naval attack, troops offloading from ships and paratroopers. The invasion was immediately violent with reports of Indonesian troops running unchecked through the streets of Dili, indiscriminately firing on enemy troops and civilians. According to former bishop, Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopez, there were many dead bodies in the streets. Details were not readily available as Indonesia declared a news blackout of the region. Although the United Nations condemned the invasion and demanded that Indonesia withdraw from East Timor, Indonesia ignored the order. A provisional government was put in place on December 17th that was jointly headed by a member of Apodeti and UDT. In May 1976 a provisional government called together a formal assembly of delegates, hand picked by the new government's leaders. At a meeting of this group integration with Indonesia was made law and on July 17, 1976 East Timor became Indonesia's 27th province.

Discussion Questions

1. In 1974 the conservative Portuguese government was overthrown and a new liberal government emerged. What policy did the new government implement that had a dramatic affect on East Timor?
2. Name the three major parties that vied for power in the newly independent East Timor? Compare their goals.
3. In August 1975 Fretilin controlled most of East Timor and the new nation's independence seemed secure. Explain how the alliance of UTD, Apodeti and Indonesia reacted to this situation

9. Indonesian East Timor

Although outwardly this seemed to end the matter, that was not the case. Fretilin's regular troops along with 10,000-20,000 supporters of independence—men who had been in the militia and reserves—continued to carry on guerrilla warfare against the Indonesian troops from their stronghold in the mountainous regions of East Timor. This went on for over two years. Indonesia hoped to keep this violent resistance against its leadership out of the international press. However, it vastly underestimated the support of the people of East Timor for Fretilin and independence. Timorese opposition to the new government and the presence of Indonesian troops caused major problems for the Indonesian government that became more and more obsessed with eliminating Fretilin and its supporters. To stamp out the support Fretilin was receiving from the people, the Indonesian army moved tens of thousands of Timorese into "camps." This policy of "encirclement" was put into effect in 1977. Many thousands of other Timorese fled to the mountains to escape this fate. The camps were often located in areas where sufficient amounts of food could not be grown to support the people living there. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) estimated that in 1979 tens of thousands of Timorese had been taken from their villages and moved into these camps. Although restrictions on the press prevented the whole story from reaching outside of Timor's borders, the number of Timorese who died either in fighting the Indonesian army or of starvation is generally estimated to be about 200,000.

During the decades that Fretilin conducted guerrilla warfare against the Indonesian government troops, the government forces were never able to defeat them. As the years passed Indonesia emphasized the positive things it did in East Timor. The world heard of the new schools, churches, hospitals and the construction of miles of roads. The average Timorese income jumped to five times what it had been under the Portuguese. As these announcements appeared in Indonesia's newspapers, the world heard less and less about East Timor's ongoing struggle for independence.

The United Nations, however, kept the Timor situation on its agenda. Each year between 1976 and 1982 the UN demanded that Indonesia withdraw its troops from East Timor and give the people the right to choose their own government. After 1982 the UN arranged for continuous talks between Indonesia and Portugal to seek a solution to the question of independence in East Timor. In his book, *A Nation in Waiting*, Adam Schwarz raises the question of why other countries did not support East Timor's struggle for independence. He concludes that in the case of the United States there was concern on two fronts 1) that Fretilin was pro-communist and this was still the cold war era and 2) it was important to support Indonesia to insure America's continued use of deep water passages controlled by Indonesia in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Australia's reasons were similar and the issue of trade with Indonesia was a factor there as well. Portugal did not seem to know how to react. One theory suggests that because Portugal was not yet a member of the European Common Market it, did not want to jeopardize its chances of membership in that organization; however, it did continue to give East Timor tacit support.

Although Indonesia established K-12 schools and a new university and built roads and hospitals in East Timor, the Indonesian government was ruthless in its treatment of Fretilin and its sympathizers. In its attempts to eliminate the organization, Indonesian forces strafed villages, burned crops, and pursued guerrillas and their families into arid

mountain areas. From 1975 to 1980 tens of thousands of East Timorese died in fighting or from starvation and disease. The Suharto government was especially upset when the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to two of East Timor's vocal supporters of independence, Bishop Carlos Belo and political activist José Ramos-Horta.

An especially vicious attack by government forces took place in November 1991 when a large crowd of East Timorese gathered to attend a memorial mass for a young man who had been killed just outside the church where he had sought refuge two weeks before. He had spoken out against the Indonesian government and fearing its reprisal had gone to the church to seek sanctuary. After the church ceremony a procession formed behind the family and marched toward the cemetery. When the group arrived at the graveyard there were no soldiers in sight, but before long they were spotted coming down the road the procession had taken earlier. The following is an account from a December 1991 *New Yorker* magazine article. The writer witnessed the incident she describes here:

"We watched in disbelief as the soldiers turned into the cemetery, raised their rifles, and took aim. Then, acting in unison, they opened fire on the East Timorese. Men and women fell, shivering in the street, rolling from the impact of the bullets. Some were back-pedaling and tripping, their hands held up. Others simply tried to turn and run. The soldiers jumped over the fallen bodies and fired at the people still upright. They chased down young boys and girls and shot them in the back. What we witnessed was no less than deliberate murder. There was no provocation, no stones were thrown, and the crowd was standing still... The soldiers issued no warning ... they simply shot several hundred unarmed people."

This incident received significant international attention and by many is considered to be a turning point in East Timor's struggle for independence. It should be noted that foreign reporters were killed or disappeared around this time in East Timor.

A brief summary of the island's history through the early 1990s would cover the Portuguese era, an independent Timor and the Indonesian era. The Portuguese arrived in Timor in the early 1500s and their control of East Timor lasted into the twentieth century. In 1652 the Dutch appeared in West Timor and by 1661 the Portuguese and the Dutch unofficially agreed to share the island. In 1913, after many official meetings starting in 1756, the Dutch and Portuguese division between East and West Timor became official. The status of Timor remained half-Dutch and half-Portuguese until Indonesia's revolution against the Dutch in 1945. At the conclusion of that war, in 1949, the Dutch left Indonesia and West Timor became part of Indonesia. The island remained half-Indonesian and half-Portuguese until December 1975 when Indonesian troops invaded East Timor.

It can thus be concluded that four centuries of colonial rule had not done much for East Timor. In 1974 there was one high school and fewer than 10 college graduates; the literacy rate was under 10%. Portugal had hardly lavished attention on its colony in the Timor Sea. A change of government in Portugal in 1974 initiated independence movements in East Timor. At this time Indonesia actually held discussions with Portugal about the future of East Timor; however, problems arose on the island before any agreement was reached. In regard to East Timor's independence, the three factions within East Timor were the newly formed Fretilin Party, which was anti-colonial and populist

oriented and vehemently opposed integration with Indonesia, and two other groups—one advocated immediate integration with Indonesia and the other preferred gradual decolonization from Portugal. In the first elections held on East Timor during the decolonization period the UDT Party, which advocated a slow and controlled break from Portugal, and Fretilin, which supported an independent East Timor, outpolled the pro-Indonesian party. In 1975 the two groups opposed to integration into Indonesia formed a coalition, but within a short while they were fighting between themselves. This came to an unpleasant conclusion when UDT tried to take over Fretilin. The result of this action was a bloody civil war in which Fretilin emerged the winner, however, between 2,000 and 3,000 people killed.

On November 28th the Indonesian government sent troops to Timor, and Fretilin guerrillas fled to the mountains. In 1976 East Timor was incorporated into Indonesia as the country's 27th province, and the independence movement became one that operated in the mountains of East Timor and abroad.

Although Indonesia established schools and a new university, and built roads and hospitals in East Timor, the Indonesian government was ruthless in its treatment of Fretilin and its sympathizers.

Discussion Questions

1. Once Indonesian troops forced Fretilin forces into the mountains, guerrilla warfare became the norm. One matter that encouraged East Timorese to join the guerrillas in the mountains was the Indonesian policy of encirclement. Explain how this policy worked.
2. Neither Australia, the United States nor Portugal supported East Timor's struggle for democracy. Compare the reasons why the three countries did not support East Timor's independence.
3. If Indonesia built more hospitals and schools in ten years than Portugal did in 400 years, why were the East Timorese so adamant about being a separate nation?
4. Many brutal incidents took place in East Timor under Indonesian rule. What made the November 1991 incident outside a church a turning point in world opinion of East Timor's quest for independence?

10. Independence

The Asian Economic Crisis that hit Indonesia in late 1997 brought tremendous inflation and unemployment. The hardships caused the Indonesian people to express their long-felt opposition to the Suharto government, and in May 1998 President Suharto was forced from office and replaced by his vice president, B. J. Habibie. In his efforts to support openness in government and showcase Indonesia's compassion, Habibie agreed to recommend more autonomy in East Timor. He tentatively supported East Timor's self-determination on the matter of whether the former Portuguese colony would remain part of Indonesia or become an independent nation.

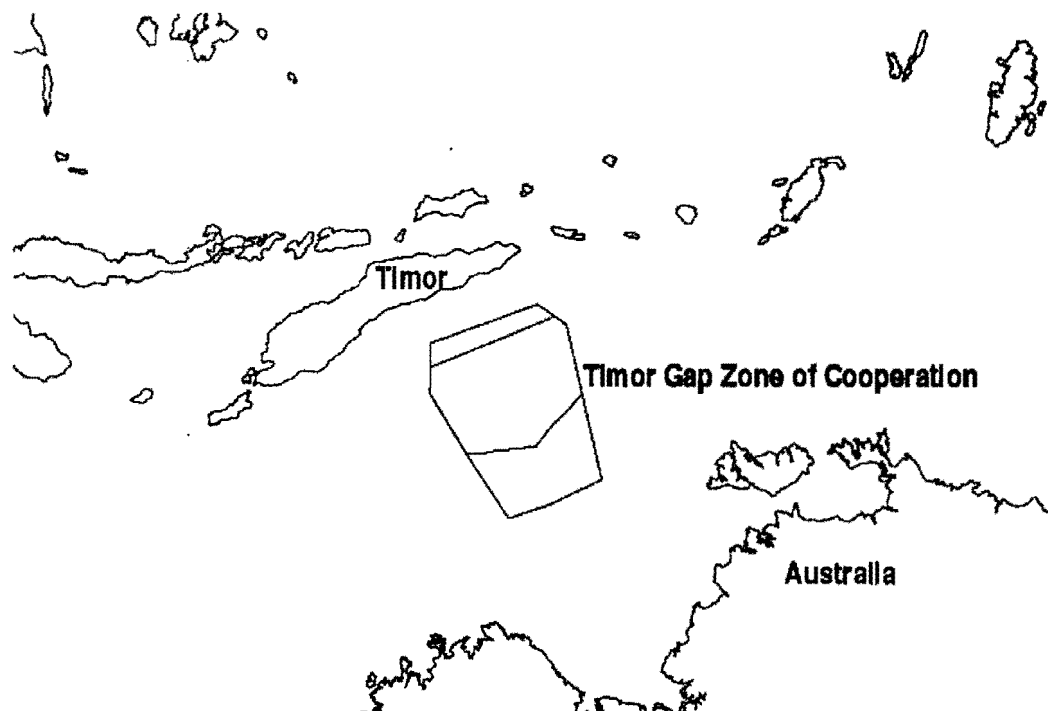
On May 5, 1999 the governments of Indonesia and Portugal met in New York and signed an agreement to undertake negotiations regarding autonomy for East Timor. The negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia concluded with the decision that the United Nations would oversee a "popular consultation" in East Timor that would determine the region's political status. It was further agreed that the United Nations would establish an office called the United Nations Mission to East Timor (UNMAT) that would conduct this popular consultation. On August 30, 1999, 78.5% of the people of East Timor rejected the offer to remain under special autonomy status within Indonesia, indicating their preference for independence. Within a day violence again broke out throughout East Timor, much of it carried out by militia organizations created and armed by the Indonesian military that had supported integration with Indonesia. During the almost 25 years of Indonesian dominance, the Indonesian military had been a powerful presence in East Timor. Without them Indonesia would not have been able to control its 27th province. The army fought the East Timor guerrillas. It forcibly moved people from villages where they maintained gardens and rice paddies to camps where they were unable to grow enough food for their families. Soldiers attacked East Timorese whom they thought to be a threat to Indonesian dominance, similar to the incident at Santa Cruz cemetery in November 1991. Members of the Indonesian military supported and joined forces with East Timorese who opposed independence to form militias. They were so well equipped and armed that soon after the vote for independence militia members killed several hundred East Timorese. Fearing further violence approximately 250,000 East Timorese bolted or were forcibly displaced from the country. Hundreds of these people fled across the border to West Timor where many remain today. United Nations staff members came under fierce attack and along with foreign journalists were forced to flee the country. On 12 September 1999 President Habibie agreed to accept United Nations assistance to restore peace in East Timor and on September 20th the UN deployed a peacekeeping force to the territory. On October 19, 1999 the Indonesian parliament formally released East Timor. Immediately after this, on October 25th the UN set up the United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET). This organization had as its charge the administration and security of the territory and preparation of government offices and infrastructure that would enable East Timor to be an independent state. It was charged with governance and public administration, humanitarian aid and rehabilitation, and military matters. In addition to this physical mayhem caused by the anti-independence militia an estimated 70% of all buildings, bridges, roads and transportation systems in the cities and larger towns was destroyed. East Timor was a

poor region prior to independence, but was further impoverished by the violent aftermath of the referendum.

Repatriating East Timorese who left the country in the wake of the violence is a major goal of the new government. There are still a significant number—approximately 30,000—East Timorese in the temporary camps in West Timor. These camps are dominated by militia members, many of them Indonesian military men who married East Timorese women and had lived in East Timor for decades. They cannot accept East Timor as their home, but have no other place to go. These disgruntled former army men keep the refugee camps in West Timor in a state of chaos.

Discussion Question

1. What role did the 1997 economic crisis in Asia play in East Timor's independence?
2. How did the Indonesian military forces (the militia) react when Indonesia declared East Timor an independent nation? Why were the military in East Timor especially angry about



Part II Culture

1. Language

According to linguist Geoffrey Hull, sixteen languages are indigenous to East Timor. Twelve of these languages are somewhat closely related to one another and Tetum is the most widely spoken. Tetum is an Austronesian language. That is, it belongs to a family of languages spoken in a vast region of the world located in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The Austronesian language group, from which more than 500 languages are derived, originated on the southern coast of China, probably over 6000 years ago. Austronesian speakers came to eastern Indonesia about 2000 years after that. Tetum is closely related to the dialects of Southeast Maluku and to the languages of the nearby islands of Roti, Flores and Sumba. Tetum does not resemble Indonesian, the national language of Indonesia, but is more closely related to the dialects of the New Guinea coast and the Western Pacific. Malay influenced Tetum significantly. In the 1850s Portuguese became the more important language of East Timor.

Catholic missionaries who came to East Timor learned Tetum, translating religious writings and prayers into the local language. In the region around Dili the Mambai language had been common prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, but within a century of the establishment of the colonial government that area too was speaking Tetum. As Portuguese became more common in East Timor it had more influence on Tetum and a creolized form of the local language developed around the Capitol City of Dili called Tetum-Pra (Town Tetum). This is a local dialect with a heavy concentration of Portuguese loan words. Portuguese was the official language of East Timor from the first days of the colonial government until 1975, meaning it was the language of government and of instruction in the schools.

In rural areas of East Timor Portuguese had much less influence on Tetum. Hull tells us that the term for the purer strain of Tetum used in the southeastern part of the island is Tetun-Loos or True Tetum. As one might surmise, the form of Tetum spoken along the border of East and West Timor came under some Dutch and later Indonesian influences.

When East Timor became Indonesia's 27th province Portuguese lost its status and Indonesian became the language of government and instruction. However, after its independence in 2002, East Timor named Portuguese and Tetum its national languages.

One cannot minimize the influence of the Catholic Church on language use in East Timor. Since the church utilized Tetum in its proselytizing and translated religious publications into Tetum, much of the literature available in Tetum is religious in nature. Tetum is expanding and growing to incorporate new words and thus contradicts those who said it was not literate enough for a national language.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Tetum became the most common language in East Timor?
2. East Timor has named Portuguese as one of its national languages. Portuguese was never spoken throughout the region, only among the elite. From 1975-1998 Indonesian was the language of instruction in the schools. The United Nations has been in East Timor since 1998 and the language of the transition government under the UN was

English. Given these facts and your awareness of the Tetum language in East Timor, explain which language you think would best serve this new nation.

2. Education

Under the Portuguese, education was not a priority. It was not until after World War II that they paid any significant attention to education in East Timor. Prior to that only a few Catholic Church-run schools had been available to the upper classes. It was much later, in 1960, when Portugal actually established a school, and it was for children of the elite. After 1941 the Portuguese government had named the church as the entity responsible for education in its colonies. Indeed it was determined that the East Timorese would be more useful to the Portuguese if they had some education. Thus in 1945, at the end of World War II, there was an increase in attendance at primary and secondary schools in East Timor. In 1973, when the Portuguese issued an edict supporting education, it is estimated that 93% of East Timor's population was illiterate. When Indonesia took over East Timor the literacy rate was about 5%. However, it was those few students who had received their education in the seminaries of East Timor and in Portuguese universities who became the leaders of the nationalist movement.

Indonesia placed more emphasis on education than did Portugal and by 1999 when Indonesia was about to end its control of East Timor the literacy rate was 50% for men and 34% for women. Under Indonesian rule, prior to August 1999, about 160,000 East Timorese students enrolled in schools across the country. About 800 primary schools operated in East Timor. The Indonesian army's departure was especially destructive to school buildings, and many were burned as the enraged Indonesian troops and their military cohorts withdrew. There were instances where the Indonesian military stored arms and fuel in secondary school buildings so that damage to the buildings was at a maximum intensity. Following the departure of Indonesian forces from East Timor the number of school buildings available was drastically reduced. The destruction of East Timor in 1999 placed a terrible burden on the resources of the new country and building new schools added significantly to that problem. Nevertheless, in December 1999, 420 schools were rebuilt and in April 2000 another 690 were open. By the beginning of April 2000 approximately 147,000 students were back in primary schools. During the first two and a half years of the United Nations administration, a large number of schools were rebuilt and by October 2001 240,000 primary and secondary students were back in classrooms.

Portuguese was made the language of instruction in East Timor's primary schools and this introduced another issue. With Indonesia running the schools for 25 years, most children and many adults speak Indonesian. Remember West Timor—the other side of the island—remains part of Indonesia. Few teachers or citizens speak Portuguese. Since school instruction must be in Portuguese it has become necessary to bring teachers to East Timor from Portugal and Brazil where Portuguese is the first language. However, given the conditions in East Timor, retention of these teachers has become quite a problem. Another issue is the matter of Portuguese being considered a “colonial language.” Many East Timorese citizens ask why they should have a colonial language as their national language. Many would prefer Tetum. There is no standard curriculum at this point, and teachers are essentially teaching basic reading, writing and arithmetic.

In summary, it is clear that education was not a priority with the Portuguese who originally viewed the East Timorese as an uncivilized source of labor for their

commercial empire. Eventually a few Catholic Schools were established, but only a small percentage of people were able to attend these schools. The education system fared considerably better under the Indonesians as literacy rates rose to about 50%. In the aftermath of independence, the destruction inflicted by the Indonesian militias wiped out a vast amount of government infrastructure, including school buildings. Under the United Nations schools are being rebuilt and more students are attending classes daily. The language of instruction remains a major problem as resentment of and lack of fluency in Portuguese play a role in education in East Timor.

Discussion Questions

1. When the Indonesian military left East Timor it stored arms and fuel in secondary schools. Give three reasons why you think it did this. How has it affected education in East Timor today?
2. Why do you think it was men who attended Portuguese religious schools who later led the nationalist movement for independence?

3. Religion

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, animism and spirit worship were the hallmark of the Timorese peoples' belief in a superior force. The great Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic kingdoms that dominated much of the rest of South and Southeast Asia did not become established in Timor. The island's geographic location, far from the major ports of Asia, and subsequent lack of commercial activity placed it off the beaten track for traders and proselytizers. The exceptions being sandalwood and later slave trade.

That changed with the arrival of the Europeans. By the late 1500s Dominican Friars from Portugal had established a mission on Timor, however, they made only modest headway in converting the Timorese to Christianity. Although the Portuguese were in Timor for centuries they had little positive influence on Timorese culture until after World War II. For years the local people consistently resisted Portugal's attempts to take control of their island, and some of the Dominican missionaries who were posted there supported them in this effort. It was not until Portugal considered granting East Timor independence that Catholicism began to be accepted among the people, and even then it was not until the Indonesian invasion in 1975 that large numbers of Timorese embraced the Catholic faith. Indonesian law requires citizens to have a religious affiliation. The Catholic Church was the only organization that the Indonesian government in Timor allowed relative freedom.

Timorese also found the Church a source of support during the guerrilla war against the Indonesians. Timorese fled to the highlands to escape Indonesian rule, and their families were often relocated in camps far from their villages to prevent them from lending assistance to the guerrillas. The Church saw the abject misery of the people and provided support and comfort. Membership in the Catholic Church grew dramatically from 1975-1999 as the Timorese people came to rely on it for protection and to help them locate missing family members. The priests and nuns of the church provided health and education to the Timorese during that chaotic period. Today 90% of East Timor's population is Catholic, although a significant number of Catholics include some aspects of animism in their beliefs. The role of the church was strengthened when Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo and José Ramos Horta were awarded the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize. In recent years the church played a prominent role in establishing schools and clinics. It should also be noted that the Catholic Church is a major landowner in East Timor.

The breakdown of religious affiliation among the Timorese is as follows: Catholic 90%, Muslim 4%, and Protestant 3%. Most of the Muslims in East Timor are descendants of Arab traders. The sprinkling of Protestants reflects the presence of protestant missionaries who never achieved the success in East Timor that Catholic missionaries did.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did acceptance of Catholicism in East Timor increase after the Indonesian invasion in 1975?
2. What role did the Nobel Peace Prize play in the growth of Catholicism in East Timor?

4. Women

Abuse of women has been a serious problem in East Timor society for centuries. The colonial legacy of both the Portuguese and the Indonesians encouraged the superiority of men, a practice that is still prevalent in Timorese society today. The colonial governments were undemocratic, patriarchal and focused all decision-making power in men.

Under Portuguese colonial rule women were not considered to be significant contributors to the island's economy. Apart from the agricultural work they performed in their villages, the primary contribution of women was seen as responsibility for their families and homes. Families were large and the infant mortality rate was high.

Although conditions for women in East Timor have improved, in most regions their position in society is still subordinate to that of men. For example, the practice of *baerlaque* or "bride price payments" is still prevalent in most parts of East Timor. Under this policy her future husband's family pays money or property to the bride's parents. This places a monetary value on women and implies that they are purchased and therefore are the property of their husband and his family. As such, a woman's husband and her in-laws may demand services from her. Present inheritance laws also favor men and several women's groups are working to assure that women be guaranteed equal rights of inheritance and property ownership.

Matters were especially degrading for women in 1999 when the UN ordered Indonesia to leave East Timor and the brutal militias were rampaging through the towns and villages. There are documented cases of women being kidnapped and kept as slaves by militia members. First Lady, Kirsty Sword Gusmão, described the abduction of 15-year-old Juliana dos Santos in a November 14, 2002 speech titled, "Powerful Human Connections" that she made at a national conference held by the Institute of Public Administration of Australia. Ms. Gusmão has been active in the cause of women's rights in East Timor where she established the ALOLA Foundation. Alola is Juliana dos Santos' nickname. The East Timorese girl was abducted in the barbaric chaos of the September 1999 attack by an anti-independence militia leader who still holds her today in Indonesian West Timor. Ms. Sword Gusmão has been campaigning for the return of Alola.

The Alola Foundation addresses many of the needs of the women of East Timor. For example, the illiteracy rate is still high, seriously limiting women's opportunities to improve their positions. At present 60% of the women in rural areas of East Timor are unable to read and write. For women to play an active role in government and hold demanding jobs outside the home, better education is essential. Women's organizations have set literacy as one of their top priorities for women and girls.

One of the more positive signs of women's activity in the country may be seen in government where women in East Timor's first democratic elections held in August 2001 won 27% of the seats in the Constituent Assembly. A new draft law on local elections sets the minimum number of seats to be held by women. East Timor's constitution contains a section on women's rights, stating that they are allowed to work outside the home, to have access social services, to become involved in politics, and to have the right to such services as education, health care and adequate housing. NGOs and similar

organizations have even encouraged women to begin small businesses, many of which are successful.

Health care is another major concern. There are not nearly enough midwives and clinics in the country. Some non-urban medical attention is under the care of international non-government organizations (NGO), although state clinics provide most health care services. Health care matters have not improved greatly over the centuries. Today an average East Timorese woman gives birth to 3.88 children, and a March 2003 government report points out that over 50 of every 1,000 newborn infants die at birth.

Despite their many serious problems, women are playing a significant part in the development of their country. As controversial issues are settled and social services become more available East Timorese women seem eager to be in the forefront of their country's development.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain how the practice of bride price payments diminishes the role of women in East Timorese society?
2. Why was the Alola Foundation established and what are some of the injustices against women that it addresses?

5. Government

On October 25, 1999 the United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET) was established. UNTAET was mandated to handle the transition, administration, security and preparations for independence of East Timor. UNTAET would oversee governance, security and public administration. Both the East Timorese and the United Nations originally agreed that UNTAET would involve the participation of the people of East Timor in all decision-making, humanitarian assistance and emergency rehabilitation, and provide a military presence. As matters turned out, the East Timorese were only minimally involved in UNTAET activities.

On March 22, 2002, East Timor's Constituent Assembly (elected in 2001) approved the country's first constitution. On April 14, 2002 former Fretilin leader, teacher, and poet Xanana Gusmão was decisively chosen to be the country's first president. According to the constitution, the president holds office for five years. The first Prime Minister named was Mari Alkatiri. The country has a unicameral parliament whose members are elected for five-year terms. The constituent assembly, which wrote the constitution, became the country's first parliament. It had 88 members and was dominated by former members of the resistance party, Fretilin.

The country is now comprised of thirteen administrative districts. They are Aileu, Ainaro, Baucau, Bobonaro, Cova Lima, Dili, Ermera, Lautem, Liquica, Manatuto, Manufahi, Oecussi-Ambeno and Viqueque.

Serious disagreement among political leaders became evident soon after the East Timor government was established, and by late 2002 opposition politicians were calling for Alkatiri's resignation, claiming that his government was thrust into power by UNTAET in order that a new government be readily available to fill the vacuum left by the Indonesian government. They further claimed that the August 2001 elections were held solely to elect a parliament to write a constitution, and that that legislative body had been guilty of holding on to power by not approving another election.

There is concern that disillusioned former guerrillas and the large number of unemployed people will express their disenchantment with the government through violence. If no solution to this problem is reached, it is quite likely that they will be joined by dissatisfied politicians, along with leaders of the old Indonesia-supported militias.

The peacekeeping UN Mission of Support in East Timor (Unmiset), that succeeded UNTAET, will remain there until May 2005. It is hoped that major political differences and dissatisfaction with government will be minimal by then and that East Timor will be in a better position to conduct its affairs locally and internationally.

Discussion Questions

1. What is UNATAET and what was its function in East Timor?
2. What do you think would result if disillusioned guerrillas and other disgruntled citizens of East Timor were to be assisted by leaders of the old Indonesian supported militias in their demands for a new government?

Summary

East Timor is comprised of the eastern part of the island of Timor and the Oecussi enclave along with the small islands of Atauro and Jaco. It shares a common land border with the Indonesian province of West Timor and a sea border with Maluku. The capital city is Dili. East Timor is ranked 154th in size of countries in the world, and it has a population of approximately 830,000. The capital, Dili, has a population of about 65,000. Portuguese has been declared one of the two national languages along with Tetum. The U.S. dollar is the national currency.

The world's newest nation faces many problems, but it has survived a neglectful and tragic past. If its leaders can solve serious economic issues and provide an environment where justice and equality are practiced the people of East Timor will face a decidedly better future.

Discussion Question

1. What three issues do you think that East Timor needs most to address if it is to develop as a viable nation? Give your reasons for naming these issues.

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